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ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the Army and Navy Club on Wednesday 15 June 2016. The Society was addressed by the Chairman, Sir David John KCMG, and the Honorary Treasurer, Mr Neville Green OBE, who both delivered their official reports to the Society as follows:

Chairman's Report

Introduction

My Lord President, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to welcome you to this year's AGM. With the agreement of the Honorary Secretaries, I present the combined report for the eleventh year running.

We have received a number of apologies from Members who are unable to attend the AGM. I will not run through their names now, but they will be listed in the minutes of the meeting.

The Accounts for the Society for 2015, copies of which have been made available beforehand and further are available to you today, include a report from Council covering, *inter alia*, Structure, Governance, Risk Management, Objectives, Achievements and Performance of the Society, and were approved by Council on 4 May 2016. My remarks today are intended to expand on that report, and I suggest we take questions on it and on the accounts after the Treasurer has delivered his report.

Council

Today marks the departure of Sir Robert ffolkes Bt OBE and Professor Nirmala Rao OBE from the Council. Our thanks are due to Robert for his wise counsel and great knowledge and experience of Ladakh and

Tibet and Nirmala who provided excellent advice and liaison with SOAS over the years. We are most grateful to them both.

The member standing for re-election today is Mr Sean Collins who brings his accounting, auditing and management information skills to Council's deliberations and I commend him to you.

Mr Antony Wynn, Chairman of the Iran Society, has an immense knowledge of Iran (the subject of tonight's Denman Lecture) and the biographer of Sykes, having stood down for the obligatory one year period is standing for election, and again, I commend him to you.

Co-opted members retiring as per Rule 25 but standing for re-election are Messrs Frank Slevin, Bruce Bowers, Andrew Cartwright, Christopher Clarke, Roger Croston, Jamil Husain, Shaun McPhee, Andrew Sparkes and David Stern. Nearly all have lived and worked in Asia over many years and know it well.

Frank Slevin is currently Executive Chairman of House of Fraser, but was Head of Global banking for HSBC in Asia Pacific and subsequently the Americas.

Bruce Bowers has over 30 years Board level experience in the insurance industry in Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa.

Andrew Cartwright has many years of experience as a banker in Asia and dealing with Asia and since retirement has been involved in various charities in the City and notably is a Trustee of the Melanesian Mission supporting the Anglican Church in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Christopher Clark has over 30 years' experience as a practising lawyer, much of it spent in Asia as a senior partner with leading international law firms.

Roger Croston studied crop genetics and runs his own bakery design and engineering company. He is a Tibetan scholar, having lectured to the Society on the evacuation of the Chinese Army under escort, out of Tibet to Calcutta, to sail back to China in May 2015.

Jamil Husain has a Human Relations background and has held senior HR roles internationally, latterly with the House of Habib in Pakistan, Barclay's, Citibank and Towers, Perin.

Shaun McPhee is the young Scotsman who has done all the hard work organising our lectures and the inaugural Schools Day in Edinburgh with the backing of the Scottish Government, which looks set to become a regular feature. He is also very knowledgeable and heavily involved in internet activities, and has experience in Korea, and was one of our scholars doing a project on the China/North Korea border, some years ago.

Andrew Sparkes had over 30 years' experience in the FCO, latterly as our Ambassador in Nepal, but previously served in Indonesia, Thailand and Turkey and is very interested in education and our schools outreach programme.

David Stern took himself off to Beijing after school in Clifton, Bristol to learn Mandarin and set up a consulting company helping international companies to set up in China and now helps Chinese companies set up overseas.

So we now have the correct mix of skills, experience and enthusiasm on Council and Chairing the various Committees and activities to take us forward, and I commend them to you.

I have spoken before about the need for a planned succession. Council at its meeting on 23 March 2016 elected Mr Frank Slevin, Deputy Chairman, and should you re-elect him today, then he will take over from me early in 2017.

Our Honorary Treasurer, Mr Neville Green, has announced his wish to stand down after the AGM, after nearly twenty years in office. Mr Andrew Cartwright, should you re-elect him today, will take over from Neville after today's meeting, but I would like to thank Neville for all the support and help that he has given me personally as Chairman over the years and his commitment has been unfaltering. I have asked him to continue on Council until year end as an ex-officio member as he is our prime source of corporate memory in things financial.

Our Secretary, Mr Alan Attryde, has expressed the wish to stand down mid-January next year after nearly four years in the role, having served the Society extremely well and by his efficient and reliable management of the Society's affairs, has allowed Council to concentrate on securing the Society's future. Plans are in hand for the appointment of his successor.

I would like to thank Neville and Alan for all their hard work and we, as members, owe them both an enormous debt for their unstinted service.

Premises

Grosvenor Estates have recently announced plans to refurbish and upgrade our current premises and have given us the requisite six months' notice under our lease and we have to vacate by mid-November this year. Consequently,

- (1) the search for new, hopefully cheaper, premises (800 sq ft) has commenced
- (2) we are relocating the major part of the Library to Haileybury School
- (3) we are planning to install our new accounting, budgeting and cash control procedures by 1 August this year
- (4) the process of changing the status of the Society to a “Charitable Incorporated Organisation” (as suggested by a member at last year's AGM) is underway and we shall then establish a commercial subsidiary to generate a future source of income for the Society
- (5) the transformation of the Society into the Digital Age via increased use of the internet and social media to attract new and younger members will continue and an outline Digitisation Plan is to be put to Council at its next meeting on 13 July.

Membership

Membership stood at 935 at the end of 2014 having suffered a 7 year decline from a peak of 1,204 in 2007. As a result of the new, improved website, membership increased for the first time to 965 in 2015, particularly from younger members, the majority of whom joined and paid online.

Library and Archives

Having carried out an audit of the approximately 5,500 books in our Library, we are planning to move approximately 70% of them to Haileybury, where they will continue to be available to members, researchers and scholars via application through the office as a general library on Asia. It will also house Hugh Leach's collection of books which he has left to the Society and will be named the “Hugh Leach Library of the

RSAA” in memory of Hugh, reflecting his love of the collection of books donated by members over the years.

The rare books and the remaining 30% of the most valuable and interesting books will be retained by the Society to form the foundation of a new, distinguished and distinctive library covering Central Asia, Indian sub-Continent and the Middle East and will be housed alongside the office and archive in any new premises we acquire.

Work continues on cataloguing the Society’s collection of maps, including the 273 maps recently donated by Hugh. One of the most interesting items here is a folded map with extensive handwritten notes belonging to General Sam Brown who led the British troops into Afghanistan at the start of the 2nd Afghan War in 1878.

We have also started work on digitising selected images for the Bridgeman Art Collection and there is now a link on the RSAA website to the Society’s holdings at the National Archives.

Members continue to donate items to the Archive and Library and we are most grateful to them. I would like to encourage members to do so for future generations.

Activities and Performance

The Society continued to pursue its educational objectives and to promote interest in Asian Affairs through:

- a programme of 20 lectures in London, 4 in Edinburgh, 5 *In the Library Talks* and 4 Asian Dinner Club functions with guest speakers, under the Chatham House Rule;
- one-day joint RSAA/SOAS presentation to 225 sixth form students from 27 schools sponsored by the Mosawi Foundation, opened by HE Mr T M Hamza Thayeb, the Indonesian Ambassador;
- the inaugural Schools’ Day for Sixth Form students was held in Edinburgh in November, with language tasters in Mandarin, Hindi and Japanese, supported by the Scottish Government, attracted an initial 130 students from 20 schools. The next Edinburgh Schools’ Day is planned for 8 December 2016;
- The Schools’ Outreach Programme expended apace and we supplied speakers. Marked and graded essay competitions on Asian subjects

awarding book tokens as prizes (supported by the Mosawi Foundation) and encouraged the sixth formers to attend our lectures where possible, including the Denman Memorial Lecture;

- the publication of three editions of the Journal, *Asian Affairs*, but the number of Journal subscribers decreased from 280 to 268 with the number of on-line article down-loads decreased from 41,698 to 39,529 possibly as a consequence;
- the Biennial Dinner was held on 20 May 2015 with 115 guests being addressed by Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, who spoke on the “Changing Face of China”, which was subsequently posted on our blog. Also our Patron presented the Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal to the Swiss scholar Dr Cristoph Baumer in the presence of the Swiss Ambassador;
- The Annual House of Lords Tea Party was held on 22 July 2015 with 80 attendees;
- the new web-site was further improved, with the majority of younger new members joining and paying on-line, reversing the 7 year decline in membership;
- The publication of three editions of the Journal, *Asian Affairs*, but the number of Journal subscribers decreased from 280 to 268 and article downloads decreased from 41,698 to 39, 529 possibly as a consequence;
- five tours were undertaken by members in 2015 to Uzbekistan (14 participants) a painting tour to Oman (11 participants), Kashmir/Ladakh (5 participants) Eastern Turkey (14 participants) and West Bengal (18 participants) – the latter ending with a reception at the High Commissioner’s Residence in New Delhi with an address by member and author, Mr William Dalrymple;
- joint meeting at SOAS with the Yemeni Society on “The War in Yemen: Political and Social Developments”.

Medals and Awards

- (a) The Sir Percy Sykes medal was awarded to Dr Christoph Baumer
 (b) Awards

- Sir Peter Holmes

Katherine CROFTS-GIBBONS - £800 - **Uzbekistan**: to recreate the journey of Rosita Forbes

Daoud JACKSON - £600 - **Turkey**: to research the architecture and building decoration of the Seljuks

Ben JONES - £1000 - **Iran**: to create a photographic record of the markets of Iran

May Homira REZAI - £500 - **Afghanistan**: to look into the lives of the Hazara people

Emilia SMEDS - £500 - **China**: to look at the changing fortunes of bicycle culture in China

- JPT Awards

Ali Rezaei HADDAD - £500 - Iran: The Influence of Iranian Lifestyle and History on the Prevalence of Multiple Sclerosis

Kasha ROGERS-SMITH - £500 - Conduct a survey of pre-hospital care received by spinal cord injured patients in a specialist spinal hospital in New Delhi

Naa Akle Dromo OKANTEY - £500 - Study into sex workers healthcare in Maharashtra, India

Arani VIVEKANANTHAM - £250 – A Clinical and Research Placement at Christian Medical College, Vellore, India

- Mosawi Foundation

Having selected 12 Iraqi medical students in their 5th year at Baghdad University and having arranged a course for them at Nottingham University, we were unable to obtain entry visas for them and have had to cancel.

Obituaries

Mr Hugh Leach OBE – the Society’s Historian and Honorary Vice-President. Council has decided to establish the Hugh Leach Memorial Lecture to be delivered annually, initially on 20 September this year, by a noted scholar and/or traveller/explorer to cover any or preferably a combination of the following subjects reflecting Hugh’s interest in the Middle East and Central Asia – exploration, recent history and military history, travel, eccentric travellers, history of Islam etc and the lecture, to be given in the spirit of Hugh Leach – combining deep scholarship and experience with the lightness, eccentricity and joy which were the keystones of his character. The lecture will be followed by the President’s Reception.

Major-General Michael Swindells – Military member of Council, Chairman Korean Veteran Association

We are extremely sad to record their passing.

Patron

The Society has continued to enjoy the active support of our Patron, HRH The Duke of York, at our various functions and he has been most encouraging and helpful with the Schools outreach programme in particular.

The Future

This is my last AGM, but I leave the Society with a committed, energetic, skilled and experienced Council, with adequate reserves to continue its transformation into the digital age, and to further expand its activities promoting greater knowledge and understanding of Asia and fulfilling its Charter as an educational charity.

Thank you.

Honorary Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year to 31 December 2015

My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Society, I am happy to say that I think you'll find my report on last year's activities somewhat more upbeat than the tone I have felt necessary to adopt in my recent reports – a nice note on which to commence my last report before standing down today after 20 years as Treasurer. I took over on 4 December 1996.

It will be recalled that your Council had previously agreed the need to bolster the Society's reserves. This decision has been effected by sale by auction, in two separate tranches, of a modest part of the Society's considerable stock of archive material. A result is that total funds of the Society rose to £379,439 at 31 December 2015, compared to £281,372 at 31 December 2014.

No member who has followed the Society's financial history over the past decade and more can be in any doubt of the need to reduce expenditure,

with a negative difference between total incoming resources (A) and total resources expended (B) persisting annually. Happily last year's (A) at £291,067 less B at £194,556 was a positive £96,511, but that figure included the one off £112,237 bolster in reserves explained above.

The intractable element here is the total annual support costs, albeit at £114,231 marginally down at year end 2015 from £120,690 at year end 2014, with the rent, light & heat costs element last year at £36,976 (2014 £41,019) for some 1600 sq ft of office and library space. Not an expensive rental rate for central London office accommodation but a cost the Society cannot sustain whilst prospects for a significant increase in the income stream remain but a strategic aim. Reduction in the Society's London office footprint needs by the planned relocation of the library will materially assist in reduction of support costs for thereafter some 800 sq ft of rented London space will suffice to accommodate remaining office and meeting space requirements.

The total cost of activities was £97,443 at Q4 2015 (£82,815 at Q4 2014) with event costs, primarily lecture room hire costs, accounting for £11,674 of the increase over the year past. Whilst incoming resources totally £200,968 for YE 2015 (£74,116 YE 2014), leaving aside the £112,237 from sale of archive materials included in this figure, the £8,732 shortfall for YE 2015 between total incoming resources and total cost of activities compares with the £8,699 YE 2014 shortfall.

The Society's investments continue to be competently and competitively handled under the discretionary management of CCLA, out-turning total market values, after investment of archive sales, of £281,372 at Q4 2014, £352,012 at Q4 2015, and £360,149 at Q1 2016.

The Society's experience of CCLA's performance over the last 10 years of their management to end December 2015 versus competing fund managers has been consistently above the average income yield whilst their invested funds have shown risk/volatility below the benchmark and average of comparable funds. CCLA's star performer in the RSAA's portfolio is its Property Fund which has shown annualised returns verses other balanced property funds of 5.5%/3.5% over 10 years, 9.7%/9.2% over 5 years, and 14.5%/13.0% over the year end 2015.

It is not the intention to adjust discretionary guidelines on which CCLA manage the Society's portfolio until well after reactions become apparent

in global stock markets to the outcome of the EU Referendum and until markets digest reactions and settle down thereafter.

The state of the membership as reflected in numbers was 965 at Q4 2015 (935 at Q4 2014) with a significant number of new, mostly younger members, joining online. Reflecting in subscription plus related Gift Aid, the figures are £75,607 at Q4 2015 (£71,731 at Q4 2014)

Net incoming/outgoing resources were a positive £96,511 at Q4 2015 (a negative £31,401 at Q4 2014), again reflecting the outcome of archive sales.

After questions were taken concerning the reports and the election held of members of Council, the Society proceeded to hear the Annual Lord Denman Memorial Lecture given by Sir Richard Dalton KCMG, which is printed earlier in this issue of the Journal.